

Notes on Diptera taken in 1976

By IAN F. G. McLEAN *

Nephrocerus flavicornis Zett. (Pipunculidae) new to Norfolk. I took a single male of this scarce species on the 10th June 1976 while collecting with Mr. J. W. Ismay at the new Norfolk Naturalists Trust reserve of Wayland Wood, near Watton (grid reference TL 9299). It was swept from low vegetation beside a main ride through areas of formerly coppiced hazel understory with oak-ash standards. Because of its large size it was not recognised at the time of capture as being a member of the family Pipunculidae, but later when sorting the catch, its distinctive appearance under the microscope immediately betrayed its true identity.

Chelifera pectinicauda Collin (Empididae) new to Norfolk. Although Collin (1961) states this species is not uncommon in Scotland, and he lists further records from Wales, Herefordshire, Shropshire and Oxfordshire, there are apparently no records from eastern England. It therefore seems worth recording that on 13th June 1976 I swept a male of this species at Upton Broad (grid reference TG 3813). Perhaps further collecting on the Norfolk Broads will result in the detection of other species of this genus hitherto known only from the wetter northern and western counties of Britain. The large areas of fen vegetation alongside broads and waterways certainly provide a suitable habitat for these empids.

Rhingia rostrata L. (Syrphidae) and *Conops strigatus* Wied. in Mg. (Conopidae) taken in Hampshire. On the 27th July 1976, one of the many hot and sunny days of that memorable summer, I visited Alice Holt Forest (grid reference SU 84) where I was fortunate in obtaining these two uncommon species. A single male *R. rostrata* was captured as it hovered sluggishly around the lower leaves of a burdock (*Arctium* sp.) at the edge of a ride. Even in flight, the absence of the median dark stripe on the abdomen readily differentiated this individual from the common and closely related *R. campestris* Mg. Nearby, flowers of the marsh thistle (*Cirsium palustre* L.) were proving attractive to insects, and among the visitors were two male *C. strigatus* in company with many *Conops quadrifasciatus* Degeer. Not only were Diptera observed in this fine locality, but a total of nineteen species of butterfly were also recorded in my notebook for the day, including a single egg of *Apatura iris* L. on a leaf of willow (*Salix caprea* L.).

Lispocephala spuria Zett. (Muscidae) in Sussex. At Pict's Wood, near Cowfold (grid reference TQ 2123) on the 17th September 1976, I swept a male of this uncommon fly under beeches (*Fagus sylvatica* L.) in dappled autumn sunshine. This capture extends the known range of this species, as the previous records listed by Fonseca (1968) indicate a northern and western distribution.

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References

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PRACTICAL HINTS — MAY

Larvae and cocoons of the Muslin Footman (*Nudaria mundana* L.) may be found in May under loose stones and rocks of 'dry' walls, by simply lifting off the top stones. Larvae of the Olive (*Ipimorpha subtusa* D. & S.) may be found spun between two leaves or in a folded leaf of poplar or, less easily, aspen, at the end of May, by standing under a branch and looking upwards and outwards, so that the larvae are silhouetted against the sky; they will pupate in peat, and the pupae should be left undisturbed (POOLES).

The banded black and white form of the Square-spot (*Ectropis consonaria* ab. *waiensis* Rich.), peculiar to the Forest of Dean, is to be found on trunks of spruce, Douglas fir and larch. The melanic ab. *nigra* Bankes, which also occurs in Gloucestershire on the Cotswold escarpment, prefers beech and ash trunks, and in one wood, larch (A. RICHARDSON).

Several species of Microlepidoptera feed on the young plants of ploughman's spikenard (*Inula conyza*) in May. The lower leaves are mined by *Digitivalva perlepidella* Stainton; the larvae move via the petioles to fresh leaves and when full-fed pupate in their mines. Two species eat out the central rosette; *Ebulea crocealis* Hbn. does so with, and the first brood of *Leioptilus carphodactyla* Hbn. without, silken spinning. The former may also bunch larger leaves together in its final instar. *Oidaematophorus lithodactyla* Tr. chews holes in the leaves and *Coleophora conyzae* Z. makes small, transparent blotch mines from its hairy case. *E. crocealis* and *O. lithodactyla* have a wide range, but the other three are southern insects. It is best to dig up and pot the foodplant (A. M. EMMET).

The larvae of *Scythris fletcherella* Meyrick can be sought in May in localities where rockrose (*Helianthemum nummularium*) is common. The larva spins a loose web on the foodplant extending over several shoots with a silken tube going down into moss or debris. The eaten leaves take on a whitish appearance which makes them conspicuous. Places where the rockrose grows over moss seem most productive (J. ROCHE).

The larval webs of *Scythris grandipennis* Hb. can be found throughout the winter and spring on gorse (*Ulex* spp.). However, the foodplant soon dries up when cut so they are best collected as late as possible. The larva pupates in the web and in late May both larvae and pupae may be found. Good secateurs and gloves are essential. Does *grandipennis* prefer *Ulex minor* or *U. europaeus* when both are present? (J. ROCHE).